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magazine



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february | march 2012

sonningcommon  
magazine



The editorial group from left to right: Jo Stoves, Joan Grumant, Christine Atkinson and Diana Pearman.

# From “ the editorial group

Welcome to 2012 and the first magazine of the year. This issue has been put together by the editorial team pictured above, who are holding the fort until a new editor can be appointed! They will continue to support the new editor when s/he is appointed.

Joining the editorial team would be a good way of finding out what is involved in putting the magazine together and what would be expected from the editor!

This edition takes a look back at some, of the many, events that took place in our village over the Christmas season and highlights some future ones – beginning with the photo on our front cover which records the arrival of the Olympic torch at Sonning Common Primary School.

The torch signals the start of the events planned at the school for 2012, aimed at increasing the young people's participation in a variety of sports.

This year also marks the celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, so 2012 promises to be busy. More news of these events will appear in future issues.

In putting this edition together, we have noticed the wealth of community activity that exists in our village and how useful it is that people email that information to be included in the magazine. Please keep sending it to editor@sonningcommonmagazine.org

Some of the articles are special features, for example, the In Focus section on Sue Ryder and the work of her Nettlebed Home. It is noticeable that a theme running through this particular issue is that of the 'Big Society' where so many of you give so much of your time to good causes and the need that exists, with many further requests in this issue, for that work to continue...

A belated wish to you all for a very happy and healthy New Year! ”

*Diana*

**DIANA PEARMAN** Temporary Editor  
 Email: editor@sonningcommonmagazine.org

PS...

Sonning Common Magazine is on sale at the village library in Grove Road for £1.50 a copy. Annual subscriptions are available for £15. Contact Geoffrey Adams. Email: chairman@sonningcommonmagazine.org  
 Phone: 0118 972 2134

Magazine contributions may be posted to: 1 Woodlands Road, Sonning Common RG4 9TD.

WHILE EVERY EFFORT IS MADE TO ENSURE THE ACCURACY OF INFORMATION PRINTED IN THIS MAGAZINE, THE EDITOR AND THE PUBLISHER CANNOT ACCEPT ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF ERRORS THAT OCCUR.

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**COVER IMAGE**  
**Olympic inspiration**

Ben Smith and Ellie Underwood, House Captains in Year 6 at Sonning Common Primary School, proudly hold the Olympic torch. They are looking forward to 2012 and a great year of sport.

Design and artwork by:  
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COPY DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE 01 MARCH 2012





## A Christmas tree 'enthusiastically' decorated by the village's children

A sterling effort from Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury to encourage a community spirit in Sonning Common has seen the first ever village Christmas Tree erected outside the village hall this year. The benefits of email meant that a message was swiftly passed around the village asking for help with decorations, lights, music and snacks for the event at very short (two days!) notice. A message was sent out by Sonning Common Primary School to all their parents to try and 'gee' up some singers and decorators.

The 10ft 6in tree was put up outside the village hall in Wood Lane so the lights could be hooked up to the electricity supply. Many people helped Chrissie to make this happen, from discounted prices for the tree and lights, to donations of decorations and a supply of cake from Sarah Sayer.

Lots of younger children and adults joined in singing carols as Gwyn Arch played the piano in the hall entrance and the children eagerly put decorations on the tree.

Hopefully this will become an annual village tradition and we can encourage more people to join in next year! n

## Wow, what a performance!!!

Chiltern Edge School put on a magnificent performance of Oliver! just before the Christmas break with the whole cast making a magical evening for the packed audience of parents, siblings, proud grandparents and keen musical enthusiasts. We arrived not quite sure what to expect from the first night of the student performance. We were more than pleasantly surprised by the end of the evening!

Guillaume Gougeon as Oliver and Martha Haskins as Nancy had lovely voices and performed their solo pieces admirably. Stuart Martin was a truly authentic Fagin with a very gravelly voice. My four year old daughter hid her face from the scenes with Bill Sykes who was played with vigour by Scott Taylor. The dancing was terrific and James Mitchell and Jenny Card, who co-ordinated much of the choreography,

would have scored 10s from the Strictly Come Dancing judges!

The students performed under the guidance of drama teacher Maz Baxter and former teacher Barbara Crawshaw, who came out of retirement specially, and brought it all together on the night.

The school should be very proud of the whole production, and the PTA for providing the bar. Our family certainly enjoyed our evening out.

Thank you Chiltern Edge! n

**CHRISTINE ATKINSON**



## A message of thanks from Lions Santa

Despite the current grim economic situation Goring, Woodcote & District Lions Club are pleased to announce they collected a grand total of £ 3,300 during their pre-Christmas tour of South Oxfordshire villages with Santa Claus this year. This was achieved with very many thanks to continued public support and help from leaders of Goring Heath Scouts and Guides groups.

Opposite are figures for the village collections for this and last year. Santa was able to do much better in the milder weather than last year.

	2011	2010
Sonning Common 1	£380.24	£401.00
Sonning Common 2	£334.34	£303.00
Sonning Common 3	£264.50	£321.00
<b>Sonning Common Totals</b>	<b>£979.08</b>	<b>£1,025.00</b>



## Get geared up for the Olympics... On Your Bike 2012



This year's On Your Bike (OYB) will be held on Sunday 22 April starting at 10.30am from Sonning Common Primary School. The usual three marshalled routes (5, 12 and 20 miles) will be offered together with a supervised playground cycle.

An exciting new event is to be run alongside the bike rides for 2012. The OYB team have launched 'On Your Feet' comprising two Treasure Hunts (1 and 3 miles) round the village created specially for us by local company 'Curious About...'

So if you are really keen then those who enter On Your Bike will have the chance to do the

On Your Feet treasure hunts for half price!

All funds raised will be shared between Sue Ryder Care Nettlebed Hospice and Sonning Common Primary School. In 2011 a staggering 6,602 miles were cycled, and over £3,500 was raised for Sue Ryder - Nettlebed Hospice, and Sonning Common Primary School.

Penny Snowden from the organising committee said "Every penny of each entry fee is donated directly to the charities along with all sponsorship monies, raffle ticket sales and proceeds from refreshments."

All the details including how to enter can be found on the website:

[www.onyourbikesonningcommon.co.uk](http://www.onyourbikesonningcommon.co.uk) n

## Christmas lunch

Christmas Day Lunch was held in the village hall for the third successive year thanks to Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury and Jill Vallis and their team of helpers.

Some 50 expectant villagers sat down to enjoy a full turkey dinner with all the trimmings, followed by Christmas pudding or trifle. The hall and tables were decorated in festive style. There were crackers, sherry and wine and a small gift of homemade preserves for everyone.

Jill produced a fine meal, served to table by the helpers before they joined the guests to eat. And there were second helpings for those who could manage more. The atmosphere was relaxed and jovial with plenty of time for chat among friends old and new. All in all a very pleasant way to spend Christmas Day.

Thanks to Chrissie and Jill. n



## Grow your own and beat the credit crunch!

The allotments on Horseponds Road, Gallowtree Common, are improving. Clerk to the Council, Philip Collings, is working to ensure that all plots are let and that neglected and abandoned plots are cleared and brought under control.

In total there are 49 plots ranging from full size to 1/8 size. All are now tenanted and work is underway to cut back boundary hedges and improve the appearance of the allotment site.

Philip is also keen to reinstate some form of Allotment Holders Association and, to this end, a meeting was held last month to discuss this and other related matters. n



## Church news for the parishes

Christ the King, Sonning Common and St. John the Baptist Kidmore End

**22 February Ash Wednesday (the first Day of Lent) 8pm service at Christ the King.**

**29 February Lent course for five Wednesdays at Christ the King at 2pm or 7.30pm.**

**"Handing on the Torch – Sacred words for a secular world";**


course material includes an audio tape containing five 14-minute radio-style starters [to promote group discussion], with questions put to a team of panellists - Clifford Longley, Rachel Lampard, Archbishop Sentamu, Bishop Graham Cray. The five sessions are: A Christian Country? – A Secular Society – A Beleaguered Church? – Competing Creeds? – Handing on the Torch. Everybody is welcome at these meetings (you don't have to be a church member), which will end with Night Prayer. The study is not too intense, nobody is forced to speak, and we do offer a cuppa and a biscuit or two! n

**NEIL SCOTT**


**On behalf of Parochial Church Council**



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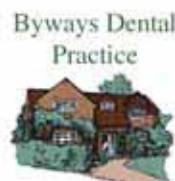
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## Library to lose half of its staff

Sonning Common Library is to see its professional staff budget cut by half, following a decision by Oxfordshire County Council last December.

The changes are to be phased in over three years, starting in April.

The inequality of the council's decision has angered campaigners. Ros Varnes, chair of the Friends of Sonning Common Library group, said: "The council's decision favours some libraries at the expense of others, many of which are in rural, isolated communities.

"We are bitterly disappointed that Sonning Common has been placed in the bottom category of provision. We do not believe

the county has provided a viable, long-term solution for the future of Sonning Common library."

She said the Friends group had campaigned for budgetary cuts to be shared among all libraries in Oxfordshire; or, if the county council was unwilling to share the cuts, to move Sonning Common to the second tier of provision where it would receive more professional staff.

Councillor Keith Mitchell, the leader of Oxfordshire County Council, said: "We have recognised the strength of public feeling about libraries and have come up with a compromise which we believe is viable.

"The Library Service will now work with the public to establish a sustainable future for each of the 21 libraries where volunteers will contribute towards staffing levels." n



## Housing plans move forward?

The public inquiry into the housing application in Kennylands Road took place 4-6 January 2012 and a representative for the Lea Meadow has had a further discussion with the Parish Council.

The Public Inquiry was held over three days. The Parish Council, represented by Barrie Greenwood argued strongly against the granting of planning permission and two residents, Simon Atkinson and Henry Pott also represented the views of the residents living adjacent to the site on Kennylands Road.

The Inspector at the Public Inquiry spent most of the three days listening to detailed cross examinations of the expert witnesses and he visited the site on the Friday morning. He saw the site from three of the residents

homes/gardens and then walked on the public footpath down by Kidby's, along the permissive path and then returned cross the AONB field from Kidmore End. He took this route to judge the impact, on the area of outstanding natural beauty, that might be caused by a housing development on the edge of Sonning Common. He will consider all of this information over the next four weeks and then will give his decision. n



## Villagers to have their say

Neighbourhood plan group meets to discuss issues confronting the village.

The Neighbourhood Plan is part of the recommendations in the Localism Act, which will enable communities to decide the future of the places where they live, for example, where new homes or businesses should be built and what they should look like.

The Plan must generally be in line with local and national planning policies. Once the Plan is prepared there will be a local referendum and residents who are registered to vote in local elections will be entitled to vote in the referendum.

If more than 50% of people voting support the Plan then the local authority must bring it in to force. The Neighbourhood Plan carries statutory legal weight.

This is a great opportunity for us to shape and influence our local environment, for example the location of new homes.

It is the beginning of a long process and all residents will be invited to give their input at workshop sessions, open events and in questionnaires over the coming months.

If you are interested in joining the group, please contact the Chairman, Barrie Greenwood, through the Parish Clerk in the village hall or email [clerk@sonningcommonparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:clerk@sonningcommonparishcouncil.org.uk). n



## Parish council update

n Cllr Dirk Jones has prepared and actioned a Snow Plan, salt and snow shovels have been bought for the use of volunteers in the event of heavy snow.

n The Parish Council will liaise with the allotment holders to work efficiently with them and identify their needs. Neglected plots have been rotivated and as a result, all the plots are now let.

n It has been agreed in principle that a working party of prisoners, under supervision, may be used to work at the allotments.

n The Clerk Philip Collings is working closely with the Co-operative Society to provide

more car parking space and to remind them of their responsibility to keep the car park usable throughout the bad weather.

n We are awaiting the delivery of more litter bins.

n Councillor Greenwood is chairing a Neighbourhood Plan Working Party to safe guard the interests of the village, specifically in new housing policy.

n The Council is actively looking for land to rent or buy on the outskirts of the village and the clerk has made arrangements to meet local land owners.

**COUNCILLOR CHRISSIE PHILLIPS-TILBURY**  
**Sonning Common Parish Council**



■ Nadine Widdows (right) pictured with her employee Helen Hobson

## Sue Ryder Awards

Two women from Sonning Common are winners

Sam Brown who set up the International Ukulele Band of Sonning Common, won the Performer of the Year category and Nadine Widdows of Pink Saucer Virtual Assistant won Employer of the Year.

The company, based on an American idea, was started in the village in 2005 and Nadine now employs six local women providing virtual and physical administrative support to businesses in Berkshire and Oxfordshire. "It's a very exciting time" said Nadine, whose business is currently expanding to the London area and even the United States.

But she will be even busier because Nadine is one of four Sue Ryder Ambassadors selected from the various category award winners. Although not currently sure what the position entails she "expects to be spreading the word". She is proud to repay Sue Ryder for the care they gave her late grandmother.

Nadine was born in West Reading. Her husband comes from Kidmore End and they have lived in Sonning Common for the last 11 years and are set to stay. "We feel blessed to live in the village" she said. n



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- \* Documents or items of interest from the last 100 years
- \* Memories, the earlier the better, are invaluable to us.

Collection points are through the library, Mel White, or school office or see our website [scps100.co.uk](http://scps100.co.uk)

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Happy 100<sup>th</sup> Happy 100<sup>th</sup> Happy 100<sup>th</sup>

## ANNUAL VILLAGE QUIZ

Friday 16 March 2012

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START 7.30pm (please)

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## Kidmore End British Legion - an invitation to dance!

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Come and dance or just listen to the music – 35-50 people usually attend

We need more of you from Sonning Common

Or if you would like to come to our meetings 2pm Batten house on Mondays

Please contact: Barbara Butler 0118 972 3279

BELOW: Back row Alan Denton. Front Row left to right Mary Burge, Sylvia Sutters, Barbara Butler, Joanne Adams, Pam Pratt, Elsie Turner, Joyce Howard



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[office.2506@sonning-common.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:office.2506@sonning-common.oxon.sch.uk)

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## SPRING FAIR & OPEN DAY

Saturday 17 March 2012

10am -1pm

Sonning Common Village Hall

### PLEASE COME TO OUR OPEN DAY

- home produce, flower arrangements, books
- giant raffle and tombola
- craft table, face painting and soft toy tombola for the children
- handicrafts – 'have a go'
- see outing opportunities theatres, gardens, places of interest
- Free coffee, tea and biscuits

Our meetings are held in the Village Hall on the 3rd Thursday of each month. Visitors are welcome to attend and we hope our Open Day may encourage some of you to join us.

Saturday 17 March – put the date in your diary. We look forward to welcoming you!

**Sonning Common WI:**  
President: Jackie Million  
Secretary: Jenny Titchener  
Contact details: 0118 9724705

## Calling all musicians your opportunity to perform

Chiltern Edge School Association (CESA) are holding an evening of Live music at it's first ever 'OPEN MIC NIGHT' on Friday 2 March at the school.

Maybe you have a great voice, or can play an instrument and would like to perform on the evening?

**Doors open: 7pm with music starting from 7.30pm**

Tickets are £5 adults and £3 under 17 – available from the school reception or by email to [cesasect@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cesasect@yahoo.co.uk) or [clivebp@aol.com](mailto:clivebp@aol.com)

There will be a licensed bar available and all proceeds will go towards the new school Dance Studio

**To perform at the event, or for any more information, please contact Helen Robins - [clivebp@aol.com](mailto:clivebp@aol.com) or 07708474605**

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[www.southchilternchoralsociety.org.uk](http://www.southchilternchoralsociety.org.uk) Registered Charity no. 297583

## Club SC is a Youth Club for young people aged 10-16yrs based at Chiltern Edge School Sonning Common

We are looking for volunteers to support the Youth Leaders on Wednesday and Thursday Evenings from 6.30 – 9.15.

If you are aged 18+ and can give up your time to support us please contact Lesley Mather at [Clubsc@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Clubsc@hotmail.co.uk) or on 07548232611 or write to us at Club SC, Chiltern Edge School, Reades Lane, Sonning Common, Oxfordshire.

Please note: Volunteers will require an Enhanced CRB costs will be paid for by Club SC.

CLUB SC



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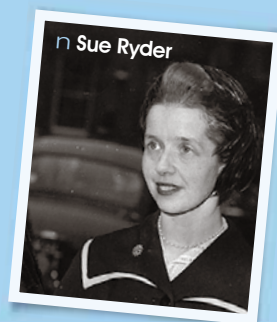
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# Providing care to our community

By JOHN PEARMAN



In the words of Baroness Ryder, *"Our work is a summons to seek out and face the reality of human suffering, and to do something about it"*.

This in focus story gives some background to the life of this amazing woman and her legacy.

Residents will be familiar with the Sue Ryder Home at Nettlebed, indeed many will have visited either to attend the regular 'Nettlebed sales' or the annual firework display run in collaboration with Henley Bridge Rotary Club.

Less well known perhaps is the range of caring provision offered at this large Jacobean style, red brick mansion sitting in its extensive grounds just a few miles from Sonning Common.



Sue Ryder

## Yesterday...

The Home was founded in 1979, as the Nettlebed Hospice, and has become a highly regarded palliative care centre run by a specialist team of medical and nursing staff aided by a team of volunteers.

The house itself has had an interesting history. Originally named Joyce Grove it is a Grade II listed building constructed in 1904/05 by a London building firm who went on to build Guildford Cathedral in the 1950s.

Robert Fleming, a successful Scottish banker, had the house built as a family home. He is better known as the grandfather of the author Ian Fleming creator of the James Bond legend. Ian was known to visit and stay at Joyce Grove as a child and is said to have met many characters during these visits who inspired his later stories.

And what of Sue Ryder herself – well she has been described as one of the most remarkable women of the twentieth century. Born in 1924, in Leeds, and the youngest of nine, her earliest experiences of charitable work happened when she was just six years old. She started helping her mother with relief work for the poor in the local slum areas.

At the start of World war II Sue, aged 15 years, lied about her age and volunteered for the First Aid Yeomanry. By the time she was 17 with the Special Operations Executive, she was assisting Polish and other Eastern European resistance fighters, often at risk to her own life.

At the end of the war in 1945 she stayed on in Poland to work with concentration camp survivors. The first care home for the sick and disabled soon followed, St Christopher's in Germany.

Her contribution in galvanising the Polish people at a time of desolation and despair was recognised in 1978 when Sue was honoured with the title Lady Ryder of Warsaw. She was also awarded Poland's highest medal of valour.

Still only 29, a small legacy allowed Sue Ryder to convert her mother's house in Suffolk into a home for 40 disabled or political refugees from Europe. It was the first of her UK Sue Ryder Homes.

Over the next 40 years she personally oversaw the creation of over 90 homes in the UK, Europe, Africa and the Commonwealth. These are supported by over 500 Sue Ryder shops and thousands of dedicated volunteers.

After marrying the dashing war hero Leonard Cheshire in 1959, together they set up the separate Ryder-Cheshire Foundation which is still going strong today supporting the healthcare and other needs of sufferers from asthma, epilepsy, leprosy and dementia.

Awarded a peerage in 1978, Lady Sue, Baroness Ryder of Warsaw, continued to throw herself into relief work. Finally succumbing to cancer, she died aged 76 in November 2000.

Her legacy of compassion still continues and as important, the commitment to providing care every minute of every hour of every day, or as we might say today 24/7 care.

## Today...

Moving forward to present times the work of the Sue Ryder Home in Nettlebed is focussed on providing a range of palliative care services to achieve the best possible quality of life for patients and their families.

Advances in healthcare mean that people with life-threatening diseases now live much longer, also palliative care is not solely focussed on cancer patients. Other chronic and progressive illnesses including brain disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis, heart attacks and strokes are all conditions which can benefit from a palliative care approach offered by the Sue Ryder Home.

Perhaps the most important testimonial to the Sue Ryder Home are the many, many expressions of gratitude from both patients, their families and friends for the care and support they have received and to quote Sue Ryder herself ... *"Anyone who has the trauma of nursing a sick loved one will understand why everyone there has striven so hard to make the Sue Ryder Home at Nettlebed a place of peace, where every care can be given to the patient."*

## ...and the Future

A place of peace it certainly is but with drawbacks. An ageing building with limited scope for improvement to patient and family facilities has led the charity to take the opportunity to work closely with the NHS Oxfordshire Primary Care trust to establish a purpose built Hospice in Henley on the Townlands Hospital site. The new building will offer single bedrooms with en-suite facilities and easy access to gardens.

The move from Nettlebed is planned for early in 2014 and its location will provide much improved transport links for friends and families. One snag in the plan is where to relocate the highly regarded donated goods' sales and the ever popular bonfire and Firework night.

Any ideas for new locations for these well-established community based events would be greatly appreciated by the Fundraising Team at Sue Ryder.

Talking of fund raising, 1.5 million has to be raised each year through voluntary activities - the sales and fireworks must continue...

There is a continuing search for new volunteers to assist in the various fund raising events or even launch their own small scale money raising venture such as coffee mornings, dedicated stalls at village fetes, sponsored events

If you can help, even on a one off basis please do contact the Fundraising Team on 01491 641070.

Two upcoming events worth a look are the **Febru-hairy Challenge** in February and the **Hadrian's Wall Trek** in April.

Details of both events at [www.sueryder.org](http://www.sueryder.org) or from the Fundraising team on 01491 641070 n







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# All are invited to the Women's World Day of Prayer

## FRIDAY 2 MARCH 2012

Groups of Christian churches get together each year, throughout the world for a one hour service prepared by women of different countries. Sonning Common is in the Peppard and District group and the participating churches are the Stoke Row Chapel, Springwater Congregational Church, Christ the King, St John the Baptist and All Saints' CE Churches and St Michael's Catholic Church.


This year it is the turn of St Michael's Catholic Church, Peppard Road, Sonning Common, to host the local service on Friday 2 March from 2-3 pm. The women

of Malaysia have prepared the service and their theme is "Let Justice Prevail". Over 3 million people world wide will be praying and worshipping together during the day, beginning when the first service is held in the Queen Salote Girls' School in Tonga and continuing around the world until the final service, some 35 hours later. By then the day will have been celebrated in over 170 countries and more than 6,000 services will have been held in the British Isles alone.

Although organised by women, this is essentially a day of prayer for everybody, demonstrating our solidarity with our sisters

and brothers in other countries and all are welcome to attend.

Do come along and join us. Our speaker will be Ann Pawson, who is an Indian Malaysian, now living locally and involved with the Springwater Congregational Church.

Refreshments will be available after the ceremony and assistance with travel can be arranged by telephoning me on 0118 972 3982. 

**SHIRLEY RIXON**  
**Secretary, Peppard and District WWDP Committee**

# Snows of Yesteryear

## a remarkable man who lived in our village

**As the Austria-Hungary Empire collapsed at the end of World War 1 in 1918, Ewald Osers born in 1917 became one of the youngest citizens of the new Czechoslovakia. His autobiography 'Snows of Yesteryear' published in 2007 tells his story.**

Born of Jewish parents, his mother died at Auschwitz in 1942 he spoke German and Czech at home and became a British citizen in 1941. Languages were always his passion, although he studied Science at University College where he met his wife Mary Harman.


During WW11 he was recruited by the BBC to work at its top secret Monitoring Service at Evesham, which later moved to Caversham Park. He remained with the BBC for 40 years.

Ewald wrote poetry and translated literary works having done so since he lived in Prague. Translating poetry was his favourite and for which he had a natural aptitude and 'without conscious effort a translated line...would stand ready in my mind' is how he described his work in Snows of Yesteryear.

In 2004 he said 'having published 144 books I'd like to try for 150'. A goal he reached as did his aim to be 90 years old.

He moved to Sonning Common in 1945 living first in Kennylands and then in a bungalow he had built in Reades Lane. He was a regular member of the Tuesday Health Walks, when he was already in his 80's. Anne Symons recalls his good company and said 'anyone who walked with him was assured of a really interesting conversation'.

Ewald outlived his wife by eight short months. She was the Editor of the Sonning Common magazine for two years and Chair for another eight. Ewald wrote about Mary's significant contribution to this aspect of village life in the magazine's April/May 2011 edition.

While she had the local reputation his was internationally known, as a poet, author and translator. He died in October 2011 leaving behind a son and daughter. 





# A date for your diary

## Open afternoon – Sunday 15 April at Peppard Bowls Club

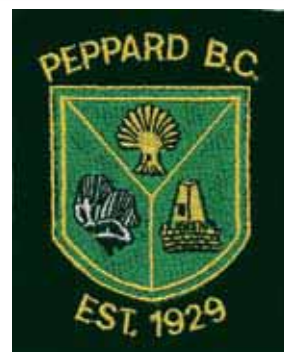
Ever fancied playing bowls but didn't know where to start? How about giving it a try at our open afternoon on Sunday 15 April? Please arrive at our Gallowstree Road green (behind the Memorial Hall) between 2pm and 3pm.

We will be there to help you learn the basics and to enjoy the friendly atmosphere of our mixed club. All you need to bring with you is a pair of flat soled shoes and your sense of humour.

If you would like to find out more why not visit our website ([www.peppardbowls.com](http://www.peppardbowls.com)) or ring our Membership Secretary on 0118 924 2617.

We are always keen to welcome new members so what are you waiting for – give us a try!

Read what our members think of the club. n



### David

When we moved in 2010 to Peppard I joined the local bowls club, rather than travel to my previous club. Playing regular all-mixed bowls has been a new experience but one I have enjoyed immensely. The club is very friendly and my wife, who does not play, feels very much part of the club. It is exactly what it says on the tin (website) - "the friendliest bowls club in the world".



### Jean & Barry

1988 – Jean asked if we could find a sport that we could both play; Here at Peppard, in lovely surroundings, we found that sport plus so much more in our social lives.

2012 – and still going!!!



### Ramsay

In April 2011, as a complete novice, I took up the game of lawn bowls. With the help of coaching sessions I quickly realised that "the bug had bitten". Joining the twice weekly club afternoons I have made steady progress and good friends. I have enjoyed every minute and cannot wait for the new season.



### Liz & John

Friendly faces, a warm welcome and a game of lawn bowls. With coaching, encouragement and much laughter, we are addicted to this fascinating (and frustrating) game – all played on our beautiful green. Come and join us.



### Diana & John

21 years ago we decided to give up our individual sports tennis, badminton and squash and take up bowling together. Luckily we joined Peppard Bowls Club and have extended our social life and made many friends.



### Janet

Apart from the enjoyment of playing bowls, the social side of the club is also important to me – meeting people and making new friends.



## AN INTERVIEW WITH...

# Sam Brown

By ROS VARNES

*From singing international pop hits in the Eighties to founding Sam Brown's International Ukulele Club of Sonning Common in 2010, Sam Brown's music career has been anything but typical. Ros Varnes meets her to find out how she wound up in Sonning Common teaching people to play the ukulele.*

Music has been central to Sam Brown all her life and her love affair with it shows no sign of waning.

Sam's talent was clear from the outset. At the age of five she learned to play the piano. As a young teenager she was writing songs and doing backing vocals and voice-overs on TV and radio advertisements.

At the tender age of 17 Sam left school and the family home in Stoke Row to move to London to make her living as a singer-songwriter. By her early 20s she was signed to A & M Records and had an international hit with the haunting ballad, Stop, in 1988.

After producing several albums, she began touring with Pink Floyd in 1994, and later,

with jazz and blues musician, Jools Holland, with whom she did up to 200 live and recorded shows a year as a lead vocalist.

Sam left Jools Holland in 2006, a year after moving to Sonning Common, where she currently lives with her family in Wood Lane.

Today she is inspiring a new generation of musicians, teaching people from all walks of life to play the ukulele.

Sam Brown's International Ukulele Club of Sonning Common was launched in September 2010. It grew from a handful of friends asking her to teach them the ukulele in her front room, to a 40-strong group of enthusiastic ukulele players who meet in Nettlebed Village Hall every week.

"The name of the club is a bit of a joke," admits Sam. "It's not really an international club although we do have one French woman in the group."

"We have had all sorts of people join us: a prison governor, an embalmer, a florist, journalist, club owner, accountant, IT specialist, a hypnotherapist and a couple of retired gents.

"The ukulele is a really straightforward instrument to learn to play from scratch and it has such a happy sound, which I think really appeals to people."

So far, Sam has run four ukulele courses and is currently planning her fifth. Her courses are becoming so popular that she now needs to start another group.

At the end of every 11-week course there is a gig. Club members have played at a number of venues locally, including a sold-

out gig at the Kenton Theatre in Henley in December. Sam has also run a number of charity events and is hoping to do a concert in Sonning Common.

Sam is the daughter of Sixties guitarist Joe Brown, who is probably best known for the hit song, Picture of You. Joe often puts in a guest appearance playing the ukulele at Sam's gigs. Her late mother, Vicki, was a top backing vocalist from the Seventies onwards, who inspired Sam's love of music.



For more information about Sam's ukelele courses and forthcoming gigs contact: [samb7@btinternet.com](mailto:samb7@btinternet.com)





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## A dangerous journey from Crowsley Way to the Co-op in Wood Lane

I moved into Sonning Common just over two years ago. I thought I would like to travel around on my scooter, as I am disabled, to find out about the village. I found that the footpaths were not suitable and the roads too narrow and too busy to travel on. There were no access points from the kerb to the road and cars were often parked across the dropped kerbs.

I also found that the shops could not give access to scooters, although the shopkeepers were very helpful and also other shoppers. I got an electric wheelchair when I came out of hospital with one less leg. I then could not get out of my chair on my own and found there were hedges over footpaths, dog poo on the paths, telegraph poles in the way and bins on dustbin collection day.

So I now have to have someone with me. The doctor has to come out to see me. I have to change to a manual wheelchair to go to the dentist. My wife has to push me and this is too much for her on the rough pavements.

I think the councillors should have a run around on a disabled scooter to see for themselves what we have to put up with. n

**GEORGE ROPE**  
[georope@gmail.com](mailto:georope@gmail.com)

## Nottakwire sing to help the SC Club and raise £400

Elaine Williams and I would like to thank all those members of the community who supported Nottakwire's two Christmas Concerts in December. We very much appreciate your interest and support and would like to let you know that, as a result of full audiences on both days across the concert weekend, we were able to donate £400 to the new Club SC. The cheque was presented to youth workers and some members of Club SC at our first meeting of the New Year, on 13 January. We hope that, as a result of this gift, the young people of the village will become aware that older residents recognise the needs of younger members of our community and are happy to support them. We wish the Club SC well in its first full year and will follow progress with interest.

Elaine and I would also like to express sincere thanks to all those who stewarded and served refreshments for us once again. It is because of the willing support we receive that we are able to continue to entertain our patrons and raise funds for the local community.

Lastly a huge "Thank you" to all members of Nottakwire who work so hard throughout the year. You really are a brilliant group of lovely people! n

Yours very sincerely,  
**MARGARET MOOLA**



## Christmas tree lights up the Village Centre

For the first time that anyone can remember we had a real Christmas tree outside the village hall.

I would like to thank the following for their help: the parish council who gave me an allowance to buy the tree; The Tree Barn at Christmas Common who gave me a large discount; The Christian Community Charity shop who gave me a discount for the baubles and tinsel; Rob Smith who erected the tree; Heath and Watkins who provided the outside lights at half price and the anonymous donor who paid for them; Gwyn Arch who played the piano; Sarah Sayer who provided cakes; the parish clerk who has helped in ways too many to mention; the children who decorated the tree and the older boys who thought it was uncool to decorate it but turned up when most people had gone and looked after the tree.

One little girl said to me. "It is the most beautiful tree that I have ever seen". I suspect this might be because the only thing missing from the tree is the kitchen sink! Thank you. n

**CHRISSIE PHILLIPS-TILBURY**

## Dogs need to be kept under control!

On Sunday 27 November at about 1.30pm, my son was walking up the footpath between Peppard Road and Blounts Court Road when he was bitten on the leg by a small black dog as it was being walked with a german shepherd type dog. The incident occurred without warning or provocation.

I hope that the woman who was walking the dogs will see this letter, so that she is aware that the bite was severe enough to cause bleeding and bruising - even though my son was somewhat protected by the fact that he was wearing jeans. I believe that comment was made that the dog doesn't usually behave like that, and that it had received all its jabs. Were we supposed to be reassured by this?

I would like to know that this 'first time' incident has prompted the responsible owner to buy a muzzle for their dog. If it has happened once it is likely to happen again, and it could be much worse for the victim next time. n

**CATHERINE DORMER**



# Tom Fort

## EDITORS

The decision of Ros Varnes to step aside from the task of editing this magazine has set me thinking about other editors I have worked with – and suffered under – during a long career as a hack. The first rejoiced under the Dickensian surname of Tunks and he ruled the Slough Observer with the proverbial rod of iron when I joined as a junior reporter in the summer of 1972.

One of his many virtues as an editor was that he had no friends that anyone knew of, which meant he did not care whose toes he stamped on. His one care

was the paper and its contents. He hated mistakes – I remember him hurling a screwed-up sheet of copy at the cringing journalist responsible for it, yelling "Slough GrammER, Slough GrammER, I suppose you went to Slough GrammER School, did you?"

From Slough I graduated to the BBC radio newsroom at Broadcasting House, where the editor was a man with the foulest tongue I have ever encountered. Fortunately he rarely entered the newsroom, preferring to rage and booze in his office. On one New Year's Day he burst in demanding

to know why Radio Three had led its news summary on the OBE given to the creator of the TV puppet Basil Brush, instead of the arty types the network should have concentrated on. His expletive-laden rant collapsed on a cry of "Boom, Boom" from one of the desks.

One of my many regrets in life is that I have never been head-hunted. The nearest I came was being taken to lunch by Sir Max Hastings, then editor of the Evening Standard. He said he wanted me to write a weekly column on outdoors matters – fishing, growing veg, throttling



muntyjac deer and so on. I was very excited for a week, until Max wrote saying his features editor had threatened to resign if my column went ahead.

Ros Varnes has been gentler, kinder and more complimentary than any other editor I have known – but no less effective for that. I'll miss her. n

# Is it for me? ...

What does being the editor of Sonning Common Magazine involve? That's the question the magazine committee have asked me to answer in the hope of encouraging someone to replace me as editor.

The first thing to say is that it's rewarding to be involved with an organisation which is so actively involved with the life of this community. I truly believe Sonning Common is a special place which has managed to retain a strong sense of community spirit, which some would say is the exception to the rule in today's world.

This can only be down to the people who live here and their willingness to engage with one another and, as we often see, put themselves out for other people.

Reflecting community life through the magazine, I think helps to strengthen our sense of community and is an important source of local information for residents.

Sonning Common Magazine has continually evolved since its launch in the early 80s. It is now distributed to nearly 2,000 homes by a team of 70 or so volunteers; managed by a volunteer committee of eight people; supported by a six-strong editorial team; and paid for by around 90 local advertisers.

Essentially, the editor has overall responsibility for the content of the 32-page bi-monthly magazine.

The content of each edition is normally divided equally between editorial and advertising material. The editor is responsible for ensuring the 16 editorial pages are filled, which includes the front cover.

A professional graphic designer is employed to lay out all the pages to an agreed design brief. The editor provides the designer with a page plan for each edition, detailing where news and pictures should go.

The creation of sections within the magazine – for example,

community news, noticeboard, youth zone, letters – makes devising the page plan easier since much of the proposed editorial material will naturally slot into these categories.

An important development within the magazine in recent years has been the launch of an editorial group to help with planning and providing the editorial content. This group is a vital support to the editor, providing not only some of the copy and pictures, but ideas and a range of perspectives.

Editorial material comes from a range of sources; some is proactively researched and written by members of the editorial group, while other contributions are made by individuals or community groups. In my experience there has never been a shortage of material; the challenge is fitting it all in!

After the contributions have been edited, they are ordered, according to the page plan, and sent off to be designed. Following

that, two sets of proofs are returned for checking and proof-reading by a small team.

The editor's role is time-consuming; I will not pretend otherwise. However, it is also rewarding and enjoyable and I know, from the feedback I have had, how much people appreciate having the magazine.

For someone with time on their hands who wants to get more involved with community life and would relish a new challenge, this could be the ideal role. Or, it may be worth considering joining the editorial group to see, at first hand, what the work involves without having the responsibility of being editor.

Whatever you are willing or able to do, you will be making an important contribution to the village. This magazine belongs to all of us and its success is in our hands. n

ROS VARNES

# This magazine urgently needs an editor

Following the decision by Ros Varnes to step aside from the role (to give her more time to devote to her other commitments) this magazine is urgently in need of a new editor. It is an important and rewarding task. If you are interested in publishing and editorial work it could be an ideal opportunity to try your hand. Why not come to an editorial meeting to see what is involved?

Although the job does require commitment, the editor is well supported by an editorial group and special topic editors may be appointed for features etc. Advertising is the responsibility of the advertising manager and the design is in the hands of our professional designer. This makes the editor's job much easier.

The magazine is produced six times a year, and payment in the form of a modest honorarium can be available.



If you are interested and would like more information please contact Geoff Adams, magazine chairman, on 0118 972 2134 or e-mail [geoffrey.adams5@btopenworld.com](mailto:geoffrey.adams5@btopenworld.com) or drop a note in to 1 Woodlands Road, Sonning Common RG4 9TD

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# PRICKLY PARTNER

Meet Rocky, a three-month-old African pygmy hedgehog, and the mascot of Forest Camp at Sonning Common Primary School.

Rocky, who was named by Harvey Phipps in Year Two, can often be seen being carried around the school in a blue, woollen hat by Forest Camp leader Philippa Byrne.

Philippa said: "Although Rocky is very cute he is difficult to look after and needs lots of attention. I have to make sure he is kept warm and exposed to light for 16 hours a day or he will attempt to hibernate.

"African pygmy hedgehogs do not make suitable pets and we have to give Rocky extra-special care. He can be quite grumpy at times although you wouldn't think it to look at him!" n

## FACT FILE

- \* African pygmy hedgehogs are hybrids. They were first bred in captivity in America about 10 years ago.
- \* They are smaller than the native, British hedgehog although like to behave in exactly the same way.
- \* They like to eat insects but in a domestic environment are often fed cat food and cooked meat.
- \* Because of their small size, obesity is a common problem. So, to keep them healthy and happy they need lots of room to exercise and explore.



Laura, a Year 11 student who lives in the village  
tells her story of work experience

Recently, I was lucky enough to do a week's work experience at Townlands Hospital in Henley-on-Thames.

I was nervous about it - what if the nurses were uncharacteristically horrible or I managed to mess up whatever menial task I'd be doing and kill someone? My imagination was in overdrive and I was seriously regretting choosing a placement that had so many risk factors.

I doubt I'll ever forget how to make beds with 'hospital corners' - the ward clerk was really friendly, taught me how to make hospital beds and the art of the morning tea.

I was sad to say goodbye to some of the patients - I got the chance to talk to some of the patients and it was fascinating listening to their life stories.

I saw how the system worked - the nurses and other staff made the utmost effort to involve me where they could, sitting in on a meeting which involved senior staff as well as several people from other aspects of the NHS.

No-one minded me being there - I spent some time in the Minor Injuries department of the hospital observing a small boy with a playground accident, to a builder, to an older woman, all with different levels of wounds.

I felt like a proper doctor - lining up the x-ray tube for both patients and the radiologist giving me details of different sorts of fractures and breakages.

Overall, I had a really enjoyable week at Townlands and would definitely recommend it to anyone interested in pursuing medicine as a career. n

## Club SC

Club SC has gone from strength to strength since it opened its doors in November... Young people need a chance to develop, an opportunity to have a voice and to make decisions

There have been very high attendance rates and it is becoming a truly valuable asset to the local villages.

Members have been consulted on which activities they want in the club and we are working hard on the affordable options.

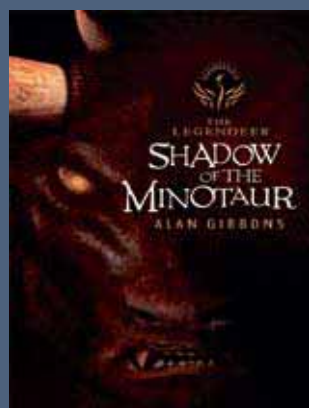
Club SC Talent night will be held soon - so look out for the information!!

With thanks from Club SC for a very welcome donation of £200 from J D Partnership Ltd., 31 Wood Lane, Sonning Common.

## JUNIOR BOOK REVIEW

### SHADOW OF THE MINOTAUR

by Alan Gibbons



Members of Book group; Scott Barnett, Harry Sayer, Alex Magee, Adam Fernside, Hamzah Hussein.

Shadow of the Minotaur is about a very realistic game called the Legendeer. The main character is a boy called Phoenix whose father created the Legendeer, a game for an anonymous company named Magna-Com. Phoenix has recently been bullied by another boy called Steve Adams. When Phoenix enters the game, he finds out that he is not the only one, his friend Laura and his enemy Steve are in the game too. Will they be able to battle the Minotaur and escape from the game alive?

SCOTT: I think that the Shadow of the Minotaur is a gripping, exciting and adventurous book.

HARRY: The Shadow of the Minotaur is a very interesting book. It has lots of Greek myths in it so it is a bit educational but very exciting.

ALEX: The Shadow of the Minotaur is a book of myths and legends mixed with modern technology of computer games. Phoenix was bullied in the real world but in the Legendeer, he is a hero reborn.

ADAM: I think this book is packed with action and very gripping. I am going to read the next in the series.

HAMZAH: The Shadow of the Minotaur is a book which is exciting and made me want to read more. This book is aimed at children who like Greek mythology and computer games because it is about a game which is based on ancient Greek myths. n

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<b>FRIDAY 3</b> <b>British Legion - Tea dance</b> Village Hall 2 - 4pm	<b>MONDAY 6</b> <b>FISH - Garden Centre Visit</b> 1.30pm	<b>TUESDAY 7</b> <b>Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society - "All you want to know about fuchsias"</b> Peppard War Memorial Hall 7.30pm - 9pm	<b>FRIDAY 10</b> <b>Nottakwire practice</b> Village Hall 9.45am
<b>THURSDAY 16</b> <b>FISH - Pub lunch</b> 11.30am	<b>THURSDAY 16</b> <b>Sonning Common Women's Institute - Researching Family History with Tony Weston. Visitors welcome</b> Village Hall 7.30pm	<b>FRIDAY 17</b> <b>British Legion - Tea dance</b> Village Hall 2 - 4pm	<b>MONDAY 20</b> <b>Sonning Common Parish Council</b> Village Hall 7.30pm
<b>FRIDAY 24</b> <b>Nottakwire practice</b> Village Hall 9.45am	<b>FRIDAY 2</b> <b>British Legion - Tea dance</b> Village Hall 2 - 4pm	<b>MONDAY 5</b> <b>FISH - Garden Centre Visit</b> 1.30pm	<b>FRIDAY 9</b> <b>Nottakwire practice</b> Village Hall 9.45am
<b>TUESDAY 13</b> <b>Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society - "Fascinating world of orchids".</b> Peppard War Memorial Hall 7.30pm	<b>THURSDAY 15</b> <b>FISH - Pub lunch</b> 11.30am	<b>THURSDAY 15</b> <b>Sonning Common Women's Institute - Annual General Meeting</b> Village Hall 7.30pm	<b>FRIDAY 16</b> <b>British Legion - Tea dance</b> Village Hall 2 - 4pm
<b>MONDAY 19</b> <b>Sonning Common Parish Council</b> Village Hall 8pm	<b>FRIDAY 23</b> <b>Nottakwire practice</b> Village Hall 9.45am	<b>FRIDAY 30</b> <b>British Legion - Tea dance</b> Village Hall 2 - 4pm	<b>SATURDAY 31</b> <b>Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society - 53rd Annual Spring Flower Show</b> Chiltern Edge School 2.30pm

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